



NEWS RELEASE

08-034

Today's Date: Friday, April 18, 2008
District: 1 - Eureka
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CALTRANS TESTS NON-HERBICIDE METHOD FOR CONTROL OF PAMPAS GRASS

Eureka – The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has completed testing a non-herbicide, environmentally friendly, method to control pampas grass in District 1. This method, called Hydromechanical Obliteration, uses small amounts of cold water at a very high pressure through a special nozzle to pulverize plants right back into the soil, which also destroys the roots. The test was performed at several sites along Route 101 near Big Lagoon in Humboldt County, and the sites will be monitored over the next 12 months to fully evaluate the results.

Pampas grass is native to South America, and is considered an invasive plant throughout coastal California. Each plant can produce millions of seeds which easily sprout along roadsides, dunes, coastal bluffs, and rock outcrops. It competes aggressively with native vegetation, and its large plumes are a distraction from the beauty of native plants. Currently, the only two effective methods of control are herbicide treatments or removing the plant's root ball, which requires either much manual labor or the use of power equipment.

In 1992, Caltrans set goals for the reduction of herbicide use - 50% reduction by 2000, and 80% reduction by 2012. Caltrans has already eliminated herbicide use in Mendocino County and most of Humboldt County, and reduced the usage in Del Norte and Lake Counties. "District 1 is committed to meeting the department's goal to reduce herbicide use by 80% by 2012," said District Director Charlie Fielder, "and we are evaluating and identifying methods which will help us achieve this goal."

NOTE TO MEDIA: Accompanying photos and B-roll can be obtained by contacting Phil Frisbie, Jr. at (707) 441-4678, or Phil_Frisbie@dot.ca.gov.

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